



Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 8, 2004

The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

The State of Mississippi has a long and proud history of supporting its military installations. This support extends across party lines and regional boundaries, as demonstrated by the signatures of the undersigned Members of Congress.

We understand that the Department of Defense is moving into the latter stages of the data collection and analysis for the Base Realignment and Closure 2005 round. As this process occurs, it is crucial that Base Realignment and Closure analysts and decision-makers appreciate all of the synergies that exist among Department of Defense installations and other entities within Mississippi and engage in a comprehensive assessment of all available infrastructure and unique capabilities, which increase the value and efficiency of military installations within the state.

We believe that Department of Defense investment in Mississippi yields many advantages that may not be readily apparent to analysts focusing on individual installations. First, there is a high degree of cooperation and mutual support between Mississippi's military installations and other federal and state entities. Second, many military installations benefit from the use of other Federal and outstanding Mississippi Guard facilities for training and operational support. Finally, Mississippi has substantially invested in making infrastructure improvements designed to facilitate military training, mobilization and operations.

Mississippi military installations are among the most cooperative bases in the nation. Long before joint cross-servicing became a Department of Defense priority, Mississippi bases engaged in mutually beneficial activities. The State of Mississippi has worked to facilitate and enhance this cooperation through the active involvement of the Governor, The Adjutant General, and a Mississippi Base Commanders Council created to enhance communication and optimize available resources.

It is also important to appreciate the significant capabilities contributed by facilities that are not owned by the Department of Defense. Mississippi has the two best Army National Guard facilities in the country in Camp Shelby and Camp McCain, both of which are also used extensively for training by active duty military units. In addition,

military capabilities are complemented by Mississippi's state of the art Air National Guard complexes at Jackson, Meridian, and Gulfport (including Gulfport's modern Combat Readiness Training Center and off-shore range). Finally, the Stennis Space Center has 14,000 acres surrounded by a 125,000 acre buffer zone that already hosts numerous federal tenants, provides an exceptionally unique Special Operations training environment and shows great promise for expanded military training.

In addition, the needs of the military have been a guiding force for State of Mississippi planning and infrastructure decisions over the past decade. The State of Mississippi has invested substantial money through a military-dedicated bond issue and other state programs to enhance State military installations. Some of these State-funded initiatives include:

- A \$200 million Port of Gulfport expansion, including a \$13.8 million Navy lay berth to enhance Defense expeditionary warfare and logistics capabilities;
- A \$4.8 million rail line and spur to Naval Construction Battalion Center Gulfport that increases expeditionary capabilities, decreases response time and lowers operating costs;
- A \$20 million Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport expansion, tripling facility size while relocating a major local thoroughfare to enhance security and guard against encroachment of Air National Guard facilities;
- A \$1.6 million ATC Tower at Golden Triangle Regional Airport to allow Columbus Air Force Base to expand operations and increase their efficiency;
- Utility infrastructure projects to provide support and reduce operating costs at multiple military bases, such as a \$16 million water and wastewater line extension to Columbus Air Force Base and similar projects for Naval Air Station Meridian and Naval Station Pascagoula; and,
- Numerous other transportation infrastructure projects, land acquisitions, and protective zoning activities dedicated to safeguarding and optimizing the effectiveness of Mississippi bases and units.

We could describe many examples of how ongoing cooperative and joint cross-service efforts at Mississippi military installations enhance Department of Defense capabilities. Columbus Air Force Base student pilots are able to engage in touch-and-go operations at the Golden Triangle Regional Airport only 12 miles away. Both Naval Air Station Meridian and Columbus Air Force Base use one of the longest runways in the State of Mississippi, the 10,000 foot runway at Meridian's Key Field, for practice instrument approaches and touch-and-go operations. Naval Construction Battalion Center Gulfport Seabees have a rich history of deploying and conducting logistical support operations through Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport and combat training at the over 134,000 acres at Camp Shelby only forty miles away. Keesler Air Force Base and the Naval Construction Battalion Center provide advanced technical training to all branches of the military. Mississippi's unencumbered airspace; modern, unencroached facilities; and substantial potential for growth will not only assure the Department of Defense of continued success but provide it with the venues of choice for the relocation of additional units and the development and employment of future weapon systems.

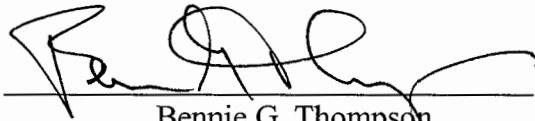
We hope the Department of Defense and the Services are engaging in a broad analysis that recognizes all of these assets, synergies, and mutually supportive and efficient partnerships. We also trust that you recognize the unparalleled history of support given to military installations by the patriotic citizens of the State of Mississippi.



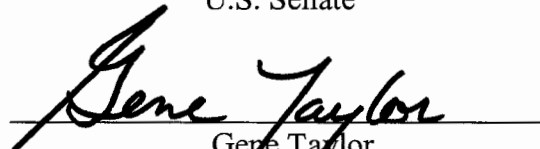
Thad Cochran
U.S. Senate



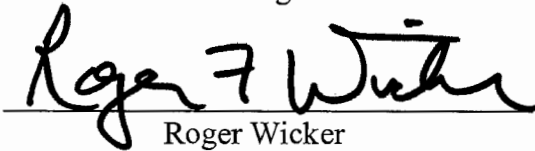
Trent Lott
U.S. Senate



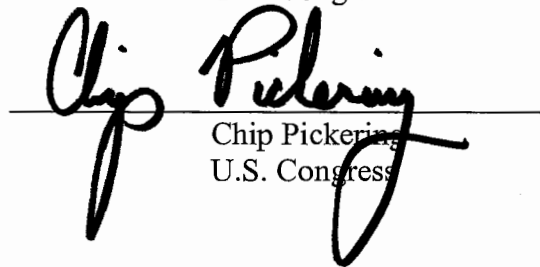
Bennie G. Thompson
U.S. Congress



Gene Taylor
U.S. Congress



Roger Wicker
U.S. Congress



Chip Pickering
U.S. Congress

cc: Philip W. Grone
Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Installations